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Tennis Alumni Serving Up Success

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Office of University
Communications


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Three former Gardner-Webb Men's Tennis Players are Making an Impact as Coaches

By Mallory Moore, '18, Intern for Communications


BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University takes pride in the triumphs of its dedicated student-athletes, both on and off the field. Several former GWU athletes have continued to find success even after graduation. Three GWU Men's Tennis

alumni, Andrew Veeder ('11), Adam Knutsson ('13) and Evgeny Slesarev ('12) have already made an impact as coaches at various schools and organizations over the past few years. Head men's tennis coach Mike Griffith is very proud of these alumni and recalls that "the number one thing they had in common was the desire to make their teammates better," a sure sign that they will make for great coaches.



Former GWU Men's Tennis player Adam Knutsson is coaching at the University of Georgia in Athens with Hall of Fame coach Manny Diaz.

Veeder is from Brevard, N.C., and had quite an impressive career as a student-athlete at GWU. As the highest-ranked U.S. junior player to play for GWU, Veeder enjoyed his time on the tennis team and developed strong relationships with his coaches and teammates, but did not necessarily see himself coaching tennis in the future. Veeder discovered his interest in coaching after accepting a coaching job near Washington, D.C., shortly after graduation. He went on to serve as assistant coach at the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne and at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, building an excellent reputation as a college tennis coach. Veeder is now serving as assistant coach for the women's team at the University of Arizona in Tucson under the reputable Vicky Maes. Veeder said that "From working with an outstanding head coach in Vicky Maes to the dedicated student athletes, I truly have been blessed to be in this position and career."



Andrew Veeder, the highest-ranked U.S. junior player to play for GWU, is assistant coach for the women's tennis team at the University of Arizona in Tucson under the reputable Vicky Maes.


Knutsson's desire to coach started when he was working for an athletic recruiting program in his home in Sweden. He was All-Conference in singles and doubles and an Academic All-American while playing for GWU and went on to work as the graduate assistant coach

for both the men's and women's tennis teams. He is now the volunteer assistant coach for men's tennis at the University of Georgia in Athens, where he works under Hall of Fame coach Manny Diaz. Knutsson stated, "My goal right now is merely focused on this year, helping Georgia to another SEC title as well as a potential NCAA Championship. From a future standpoint, I do believe that this is the field in which I belong and it is definitely something I can see myself doing for an extended period of time."

Slesarev, a talented athlete from Russia, had a huge impact on the GWU tennis program. His skills are reflected in his many awards and wins, including GWU athlete of the year in 2010, Conference player of the year in 2010, and number-one player for GWU for four years in a row. He also stayed at GWU after graduation as an assistant coach. Two years ago, Slesarev opened a tennis academy in Charlotte, which was rebranded this past March as the Charlotte International Tennis Academy. He said that he wanted to open this program to "create a competitive academy in Charlotte and give kids quality instruction to help them get to the next level and fulfill their dreams." He spoke fondly of his time at GWU and wants to help young tennis players improve their game so that they can enjoy tennis at the college level as well.

These hard-working individuals have promising futures as tennis coaches, and their successes during college have made a lasting impact on the GWU tennis program.

All three seemed to agree that one of the most positive aspects of GWU tennis was the relationships they formed with the team, particularly Coach Griffith, who they still keep in touch with. Griffith believes that "all of these guys made me a better coach and I learned as much from them as they did me. They are great people with fantastic futures."



Evgeny Slesarev, GWU Athlete of the Year in 2010, owns and operates Charlotte (N.C.) International Tennis Academy.

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